



Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers July 1, 2008

Michigan News You Can Use

Employers and MIOSHA Joining Together

For the fourth annual "Take a Stand Day," MIOSHA will dedicate more than 125 professional staff to work cooperatively with employers to heighten awareness and address workplace safety and health issues on August 7, 2008. "Take a Stand Day" offers employers in high hazard industries an information "check-up" on their safety and health efforts ---- **without fear of fines or penalties**. For more information, link to:
<http://www.michigan.gov/dleg/0,1607,7-154-11407-189124--,00.html>

Booster Seat Law in Effect JULY 1

Michigan's new booster law takes effect today, July 1, 2008, and requires children who are not yet 8 years old or 4' 9" to ride in a properly fitting child safety seat or booster seat. Informational flyers on the new booster seat law can be ordered by e-mailing trafficsafety@michigan.gov. For more information about the law and child safety and booster seats, visit <http://www.michigansafekids.org/newlaw.php>

Save the Date: Traffic Safety Summit is March 24-26

The Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP) is hosting the 14th Annual Michigan Traffic Safety Summit, March 24-26, 2009, at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing. We are planning an employer traffic safety track to this year's conference, so please save the date on your calendars now. More information regarding the Summit agenda and registration will be available later this year.

Driving Skills for Life Program is July 19th

A partnership with the Michigan Department of State Police (MSP), Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP), and the Driving Skills for Life (DSFL) program is providing a free training course designed to make teens better and safer drivers. This innovative program is sponsored by the Ford Motor Company Fund and the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA). Through it, teen drivers will have a unique opportunity to learn advanced driving skills with hands-on training provided by the MSP Precision Driving Unit located at the MSP Training Academy in Lansing. To be eligible, students must have a Level 2 Intermediate License under the Michigan Graduated Driver Licensing Program. Class size is limited and admission is on a first-come, first-serve basis. For more information, please contact Dianne Perukel at OHSP at (517) 333-5337.

Latest Traffic Safety News

Nationwide Survey Finds Drivers Feel Pressured to Stay Connected

While four out of five drivers admit to driving while distracted (DWD), 98 percent of drivers believe they are safe drivers' despite admitting to doing some of the very things they view as dangerous when done by others. Nationwide Insurance recently conducted their second annual DWD survey designed to expose why people drive while distracted. Survey respondents' responses indicated that an increasing use of technology and the pressure to stay connected were the biggest causes of DWD. The increasing use of items like cell phones, Blackberries, MP3 players and GPS systems are preoccupying drivers. Because safe driving is important to Nationwide, they are partnering with the National Safety Council to hold a symposium in October to better understand the distracted driver problem and how to solve it. Source: Nationwide e-News Release, June 26, 2008



Seat Belt Usage Low Among Commercial Motor Vehicle Drivers

DriveCam Inc., a global driver risk management company, announced that seat belt usage statistics remain low among commercial motor vehicle (CMV) drivers despite tougher seat belt laws and increasingly stringent corporate policies. DriveCam gathered data from 1,985 CMV drivers and found that 1,286, or nearly 65 percent of them had at least one seat belt violation. This analysis follows the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's release of its Safety Belt Usage by Commercial Motor Vehicle Drivers 2007 Survey earlier this year that reported overall safety belt usage rate for drivers of all medium and heavy duty trucks and buses combined was 65 percent.

Source: DriveCam News Release, June 24, 2008

Lack of Sleep Could Lead to Risky Behavior

Researchers at the Harvard Medical School and the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research found that people who are sleep deprived are more likely to engage in risky behavior. Volunteers were deprived of sleep for seven nights and then were tested with playing cards to determine how susceptible they were to risk-taking behavior. "Lack of sleep appears to cause people to lose the ability to weight things up and make a sensible decision," a researcher said. It could take days to reverse risky behavior patterns. Source: National Sleep Foundation, June 23, 2008

MD Trooper Cites Man for Driving too Slow in Attempt to Save Gas

Experts say motorists can save money on gas by slowing down but as one Maryland man found out, that may not always be a good idea. A motorist was pulled over by a MD state trooper as he was "hyper-miling" on Interstate 95 on his way to BWI Airport. He said his car would roll down hills at up to 65 mph, and he would tap the gas until it reached 55 mph going uphill or 50 mph just pattering down the road. The motorist driving a Honda hybrid was admittedly a "hyper-miler," someone who stretches his or her car's miles per gallon by altering his or her driving habits, but he was surprised when he was pulled over. The trooper was concerned with motorist safety and issued the driver a warning for driving 15 mph under the posted speed limit. According to Maryland driving laws, slow speed impeding traffic is prohibited. Troopers have discretion to pull over motorists if they feel they are creating unsafe driving conditions---by driving too slow. Source: nbc4.com, June 25, 2008

Governors Urge Congress to Fix Shortfall in Highway Trust Fund

Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm and South Dakota Gov. Mike Rounds sent a letter to Congress urging legislators to address the impending funding shortfall of the Highway Trust Fund. As chair and vice-chair of the Economic Development and Commerce committee, the governors said a fix is necessary to ensure states with a July 1 fiscal year start up will receive the amount of federal transportation funds promised to them by law. Estimates of the deficit range from \$1.1 billion to \$3.2 billion.

Americans Driving Fewer Miles

In what might be more than a temporary attitude change, Americans drove 22 billion fewer miles from November to April than during the same time period last year. It's the biggest drop since gas supply shortages in 1979-80. The decline in total miles traveled is only 1 percent, but the number of drivers and vehicles grows by 1 to 2 percent a year. The declines are sharpest on rural roads. "There's a sense of sustained pain," a Georgia Tech professor said. "There's a sense that the era of cheap energy is a thing of the past." Drivers might notice some reduction in congestion, and housing patterns might change as people move closer to work. A shift in miles driven might also change the way roads, bridges and transit are funded. For more information, go to

http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-06-19-drivingless_N.htm Source: USA Today, June 19, 2008

Speeders Slapped with Fuel Surcharges

Some cash-strapped U.S. municipalities are slapping fuel surcharges onto tickets issued to speeding drivers in order to fill dwindling city coffers hit hard by skyrocketing gas prices. Beginning Jul. 1, Holly Springs, Georgia, near Atlanta, will add a surcharge of 12 dollars for each moving violation to avert a budget deficit caused by high fuel



prices. Other American municipalities considering similar measures include: Florida's Key West and California's Los Angeles County. Source: Government Fleet e-Weekly, June 25, 2008

High Gas Prices Lure Drivers to the City, Public Transportation

For some relief from the housing crisis, rising gas prices and credit crunch, some Americans are moving from the suburbs back to cities. One attraction to urban living is mass transportation, and ridership on transit systems is booming. More than 30 U.S. cities are investing millions in public transportation. "This housing crisis and the energy crisis and the food costs are going to yield urbanization," a housing consultant said. For more information, go to <http://www.abcnews.go.com/GMA/PainAtThePump/story?id=5192736&page=1>

Source: Good Morning America, June 18, 2008

Increase in Gas Prices Changes Buying Habits

To cope with \$4 a gallon gas, Americans are changing vacation plans, planning errand trips and using carpools and mass transit. Some major franchises have stopped free pizza delivery, SUV sales are dropping, and prices of houses far from jobs or mass transit are being slashed. The tourism industry is expecting a slow summer. Nearly 60 percent of Americans think they'll be paying \$5 for a gallon of gas by the end of the year. To promote driving, the Car Care Council is marketing its benefits by arguing that driving is still cheaper than flying. For more information, go to <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/06/08/AR2008060800574.html>

Source: Washington Post, June 10, 2008

Study Finds GPS Helps People Drive More Safely

Drivers appear more relaxed, more in control and more alert when a GPS device is guiding them, according to a study commissioned by TomTom, a GPS manufacturer. But only a third of the respondents said they never operate the GPS while driving, meaning that most fiddle with it behind the wheel. The study also says drivers save gas by taking more-efficient routes. For more information, go to <http://www.usnews.com/blogs/daves-download/2008/06/17/study-says-gps-makes-for-safer-drivers.html>

Source: US News & World Report, June 17, 2008

Commuters

Survey Looks at Most Congested Rush Hours across the Country

Traffic congestion in the United States increased nearly 2 percent in 2007, and there's no relief in sight for 2008, according to a study by INRIX, a traffic information provider. The INRIX National Traffic Scorecard took a micro look at traffic issues across the country. Los Angeles, New York and Chicago accounted for more than half of the top 1,000 bottlenecks nationwide. Overall, the worst weekday commute is Friday from 5-6 p.m. For more information, go to <http://inrix.com/pressrelease.asp?ID=56>

Source: Inrix Press Release, June 17, 2008

Pedal Power Soars as Gas Prices Increase

Some U.S. cities are seeing bicycles becoming more popular as gas gets more expensive. Commuters in Chicago, Washington, D.C. and Portland, Ore. can use recently built bicycle lanes, bike-parking locations and bike-friendly transit systems. Although 40 percent of personal trips are less than two miles, Americans use bikes for transportation only about 1 percent of the time. In bike-friendly Portland, more than 5 percent of commuters ride their bikes to work. Programs that encourage public biking and safety education for children, along with 114 miles of "bicycle boulevards," are a few reasons people are fond of biking in the city. The boulevards are quiet streets where bikes have priority over cars. For more information, go to

<http://www.reuters.com/article/domesticNews/idUSN1245324520080612> Source: Reuters, June 12, 2008



Texas Cities Urge Employers to Reduce Workers' Commutes

Cities in North Texas soon might try to pressure companies to cut their employees' car trips to work in exchange for getting highway construction nearby. The goal is to reduce congestion and cut pollution. Under the city ordinances, employers would give incentives to employees to use mass transit, carpool, walk or bike to work, work from home or compress the workweek. The idea is to cut single-vehicle occupancy trips by 5 to 10 percent during the week and then ramp that number up during construction. Traffic in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area is among the worst in the nation, and congestion costs the area \$2.75 billion annually. About 89 percent of the region's employees would be affected. Similar measures attempted in the past show that involving employers and employees in the solution increases the chances of success. For more information, go to <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/25325133/> Source: Dallas Business Journal, June 23, 2008

Advancing Technology

Power-based Chips Help Increase Cars' Safety Controls

STMicroelectronics and Freescale Semiconductor separately announced new minicomputers—or microcontroller units (MCUs)—that can make a car safer by speeding up chips that control functions such as airbag release and brake control. The companies jointly developed the technology on which the MCUs are based. Because fuel efficiency is becoming a concern, more power is necessary to regulate fuel consumption with better engine control and ignition timing. The new 32-bit chips also provide the horsepower to run safety checks to make sure systems are being deployed correctly. Hybrids and fuel-cell cars will need powerful MCUs because they run more functions on them than conventional cars do. For more information, go to http://www.pcworld.com/businesscenter/article/147084/powerbased_chips_to_boost_safety_controls_in_cars.html Source: PC World, June 13, 2008

News from USDOT

Dropping Gas Tax Revenue Shows Need for New Model, Secretary Says

Americans are driving less for the sixth month in a row, meaning that the federal Highway Trust Fund is receiving less revenue from gasoline and diesel sales. U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters said the decrease highlights a need to find a new way to fund highway construction and maintenance. Though trends show that Americans will continue to drive despite high gas prices, they'll drive more fuel-efficient vehicles that use less gas. "History shows that we're going to continue to see congested roads while gas tax revenues decline even further," Peters said. For more information, go to <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/tvtw/tvtpage.htm> Source: USDOT News Release, June 18, 2008

NHTSA Says No to Proposed Rule to Shut Off Vehicle-Integrated Phones Automatically

Although, federal regulators agree that distracted drivers are dangerous, the government won't require that phones built into cars and trucks shut down automatically when the vehicles are moving. Clarence Ditlow, the executive director of the Center for Auto Safety, proposed such a rule last year. It would have required a lockout mechanism to shut off any vehicle-integrated telephone or other communication device when a motorist shifted the transmission into drive or reverse. In a public notice issued this month, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) said it found "no reason to believe" Ditlow's proposal "would result in safety benefits." NHTSA recommends that motorists not use phones while driving, but the agency argued that if it adopted Ditlow's proposal, motorists likely would use hand-held phones more. Research from 2005 indicated that 6 percent of drivers were using hand-held phones at any time. NHTSA is currently examining technology that could increase the effectiveness of collision warning devices when drivers may be distracted, according to the notice rejecting Ditlow's proposal. Source: Automotive News, June 25, 2008

International Traffic Safety News

Speeding Drivers Cost United Kingdom Billions in Wasted Carbon Dioxide

If UK drivers obeyed the speed limit, they would save 2.1 million tons of CO₂ a year, scientists estimate. The value of the fuel savings would be £1 billion. But when law enforcement officers patrol the roads, it's not cost savings they have on their minds. "Enforcement of motorway speed limits does save fuel, but enforcement is implemented primarily for road safety reasons," transport minister Jim Fitzpatrick said. Source: FleetNews, June 16, 2008

Carmakers Band Together for Road Tests

Major vehicle manufacturers in Europe are working together to road test new intelligent and safety technology. The euroFOT tests will use 1,500 vehicles from 11 brands over the next three years. The automakers will assess forward collision, lane departure, curve speed and driver impairment warnings; adaptive cruise control; blind spot information systems; fuel efficiency advisers and speed limiters. The goal of the tests is to assess whether the technology is effective in real-life conditions. Source: FleetNews, June 16, 2008

Trial Will Test Systems That Automatically Slow Speeding Cars

Three Australian states will test car systems that notify drivers of speed limits and reduce the speed if they fail to drive at the limit. The NSW Centre for Road Safety will fit 100 cars with GPS devices that warn drivers when they're going too fast. If the drivers don't slow down, the supply of fuel to the engine will be limited, forcing a reduction in the vehicle's speed. The trial could lead to a wider rollout of the system if it's successful. The trial will last 18 months and cost \$1 million. Researchers will analyze behavior to see if the technology affects driving habits. In emergency situations, an override function would give drivers control. For more information, go to <http://news.theage.com.au/national/gps-system-used-to-slow-speeding-cars-20080624-2vxj.html>

Source: AAP, June 24, 2008

Tailgating Study Finds Inattention Causes More Rear End Crashes

Various forms of inattention are more-frequent causes of rear-end crashes than tailgating, according to a report from the Centre for Automotive Safety Research at the University of Adelaide, Australia. The report found that short gaps between one vehicle and the next are commonplace. Measures to counter tailgating include advisory signs, road markings, enforcement and vehicle improvements. The researchers acknowledge that if police were to enforce a minimum following distance, traffic flow could be affected. For more information, go to <http://casr.adelaide.edu.au/publications/researchreports/CASR046.pdf>

Work-Home

Head Injuries in Pennsylvania Spike after Helmet Law Repeal

Since Pennsylvania repealed its law requiring motorcycle riders to wear helmets in 2003, head injuries have spiked significantly. A University of Pittsburgh Medical Center study showed a 32 percent increase in motorcycle head-injury deaths and a 42 percent increase in head-injury hospitalizations from 2003 to 2005. Twenty states require all riders to wear helmets, but in Pennsylvania only those under 21 and with less than two years' experience who haven't taken a safety course must wear them. The study, which found that 24 percent fewer motorcycle riders wore helmets after the law was repealed, will appear in the August issue of American Journal of Public Health. Motorcycle advocates and Gov. Rendell continue to defend the repeal. For more information, go to http://www.eveningsun.com/ci_9574790 Source: Philadelphia Inquirer, June 13, 2008

School Shocks Students by Saying Classmates Died in Drunk Driving Crashes

California Highway Patrol officers told 20 classrooms at El Camino High School that some of their classmates were killed in drunk driving crashes over the weekend. Students' reactions turned from grief to anger when teachers revealed the news was a hoax to bring attention to the consequences of drunk driving. "They were traumatized, but we wanted them to be traumatized," a guidance counselor at the school said. "That's how they get the message."



Source: JoinTogether, June 20, 2008

GHSA Surveys States on Motorcycle Programs

Survey of the States: Motorcycle Safety Programs, a new report from the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA), looks at programs states have implemented to keep motorcyclists safe. In 2006 motorcycle fatalities increased for the ninth straight year. Nearly a third of all fatalities occurred in California, Texas and Florida alone. The report finds that a patchwork of laws and scant enforcement exists, even though evidence shows proper helmet use saves lives. Motorcycle licensing requirements vary, and an explosion in motorcycle ownership widened gaps in education. Many bikers ride without proper licenses, and funding shortfalls are commonplace. The report came out in time for Congress to reauthorize surface transportation programs, including those focused on motorcycle safety. Source: GHSA, June 18, 2008

Research

Drivers with Bumper Stickers Aggressive about Protecting Territory

Psychologists at Colorado State University found that drivers who put stickers, decals and other pieces of flair on their cars are more likely to have road rage than those who don't. People who personalize their vehicles are marking their territory and are more aggressive about protecting their turf. In an experiment, participants sat a green left-turn arrow to see how long it would take other drivers to honk. Those with bumper stickers and other markers honked a full 2 seconds sooner than those without. Source: Chicago Tribune, June 24, 2008